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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SU](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: EASTERN FRONT NEGOTIATIONS PROCEED; OPTIMISM
OVERSTATED

Classified By: CDA Jennifer McIntyre for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Negotiations between the Sudanese Government of National Unity (GNU) and Eastern Front (EF) are proceeding apace with the third and final committee currently in session. While the GNU, the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) mediator and many in the diplomatic community seem pleased with the progress of negotiations since their resumption August 8, advisors for the Eastern Front and other outside observers continue to articulate concern about the direction of the discussions and the ability of the Eastern Front to implement the agreement. The divisions within the Eastern Front have grown. All parties believe an agreement will be reached soon, possibly within the next month. However, the terms of the agreement indicate the GNU is railroading the Eastern Front and with the weaknesses within the Eastern Front concerns regarding implementation arise. End Summary.

GSE MEDIATOR: ALL IS WELL

¶2. (C) On September 20, PFDJ Political Head and Chief mediator Yemane Ghebreab briefed the diplomatic corps on the status of negotiations. Ghebreab characterized the work of the committees as largely successful with a narrowing gap⁸ for all outstanding issues. While the negotiations will not conclude prior to Ramadan's start on September 24 as originally hoped, he believes an agreement can be reached within a short timeframe.

¶3. (C) Ghebreab outlined the outstanding issues still remaining from each of the three committees: wealth-sharing, security arrangements and power-sharing (the committee currently meeting). With regards to wealth sharing, the primary issue for resolution is the amount to be provided by the GNU for the national development fund. Ghebreab expressed optimism that both sides would be able to negotiate an acceptable figure shortly. On issues of security, he

noted that an agreement is nearly complete and the mechanisms for monitoring compliance, after an agreement is signed are being discussed.

14. (C) In discussions on power-sharing, Ghebreab said that the Eastern Front and GNU remain at loggerheads. The Eastern Front continues to push for a single state structure while the GNU maintains they cannot change the whole national system of three levels of government to accommodate a different system only for the East. Ghebreab said that one compromise under discussion is the possible establishment of a regional coordinating body for the East in lieu of a formal regional government, however, details have yet to be articulated. He also mentioned that the GNU is considering a nation-wide conference to review the whole government structure in light of its political commitments under the Naivasha agreements and demands for greater political representation from Darfur entities. Ghebreab posited that the one-state issue for the East will likely be postponed beyond these negotiations for future resolution.

15. (C) In an interesting aside, Ghebreab noted that as a result of the negotiations the Eastern Front has been consolidating itself into a unified political entity which will enable it to work effectively with the GNU on implementation. (Comment: This upbeat assessment contradicts what we are hearing about Eastern Front relationships, described further below. End Comment.)

SUDANESE CHARGE: ALL IS WELL

16. (C) On September 14, Charge and Poloff met with Sudanese Charge Hussein Mohamed Hussein. Hussein said the negotiations were going well and agreements on wealth-sharing and security were nearly complete. On wealth-sharing, he noted that the GNU proposal of USD 300 million fell far short of the Eastern Front's expectation of USD 1 billion, however, the GNU had on-going projects they felt should be credited. He did concede the GNU might be willing to provide as much as USD 500 million for the fund over a three-phased, seven-year period, the first year being a grace period during which a feasibility study would be conducted.

17. (C) On the security arrangements, he acknowledged a standoff between the Eastern Front and the GNU on the Eastern Front's unwillingness to release the location and number of their military forces. According to Hussein, the GNU needs to have this information to develop appropriate plans to either incorporate the Eastern Front forces into the Sudanese military, security or police forces or integrate them into civil society. He emphasized GNU interest in increasing representation from the East (not necessarily the Eastern Front) in the SAF, police and security forces, noting that the East is currently underrepresented in these services.

18. (C) Hussein underscored the GNU position against the establishment of a single Eastern state, which would create too many governmental levels. Hussein believes that the Eastern Front will relinquish this demand as the GNU is offering very good representation at all levels of government.8 Moreover, Hussein went on, there are already representatives from the East in the central and state governments and that this must be considered in the negotiations (thus insinuating that the Eastern Front should not get too greedy in their requests as the GNU considers anybody from the East, whether or not they are members of the groups represented by the Eastern Front, to be part of the agreement). Ultimately, he claimed the Eastern Front will accept the situation as it is.8

19. (C) Hussein praised the GSE mediators for their efforts although he repeated the GNU refrain that the GSE are most likely in favor of the opposition.8 He claimed the Eastern Front is also very happy8 so far with the mediators and felt that the Eastern Front and the GNU had built strong relations.8

NORWEGIAN ADVISOR: ALL IS WELL

¶10. (C) Also on September 14, the Norwegian Ambassador convened an Eritrean-based Sudan Contact Group, with membership paralleling the membership of the group who recently met in Oslo. Dr. Kjell Hodnebo, Senior Advisor on Sudan for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, briefed the group on the negotiations noting, &good progress had been made over the summer8. While he echoed much of what was said by the Sudanese Charge, he added some new information. First, the decision not to discuss the pipeline, mineral wealth and Port Sudan as part of a wealth-sharing agreement was made by the GNU with the reluctant consent of the Eastern Front, and not a mutual decision as claimed by the GNU. Secondly, he confirmed that the GNU is adamant about keeping the East divided into three states and noted that the Eastern Front has indicated that it would be willing to concede this point in end-game negotiations, so long as a future referendum could be held in the East on this point.

¶11. (C) Kjell commented that the Eastern Front negotiations were proving much easier than those in Abuja, He cited as reasons: the relatively peaceful security situation in the East versus Darfur; the willingness of the GNU to engage in negotiations and eagerness to reach resolution; and greater SPLM influence with the GNU in the EF negotiations; the greater unity of the Eastern Front than the parties in Darfur; and finally the effectiveness of the GSE as mediator. He also passed on that the Eastern Front members, namely Dr. Dirar, told him they were pleased with the mediator and had not been &rolled over8 by the mediator.

EASTERN FRONT ADVISOR: ALL IS NOT WELL

¶12. (C) Dr. Taisier Ali (protect) of the Center for Peacekeeping in the Horn of Africa, a key advisor for the Eastern Front with close relationships to SPLM members of the GNU negotiating team, relayed his concerns to Poloff about breakdowns within the Eastern Front negotiating team. According to Dr. Ali, the Eastern Front negotiators have no common approach and do not meet to strategize before committee meetings. During the discussions on wealth-sharing, disagreements on strategy and desired outcomes within the Eastern Front nearly resulted in Dr. Amna Dirar,s departure from the team. Musa Muhammed Ahmed, the Chair of the Eastern Front, has refused to make any plans for implementation or accept any offers of training. In addition, the week of September 10, Musa insisted that the Eastern Front did not want face-to-face negotiations with the GNU because it would result in insults and recriminations, and insisted that that the mediators meet separately with the parties.

¶13. (C) Dr. Ali shared with Poloff parts of his conversation with Malik Agar Ayar, the GNU,s Minister of Investment, SPLM member and part of the GNU,s negotiating team. Malik told Ali that the Eastern Front &had gotten a good deal8 with regards to the security arrangements, but admitted the GNU was playing on the tribal divisions, disorganization and weaknesses of the Eastern Front. Politically, the GNU is seeking to control the allotments of local government positions as a means to isolate specific communities in the East. Dr. Ali described Malik,s interpretation of the proposed national development fund as &dangling a carrot8 in front of individual members of the Eastern Front and commented that some EF members seem to be willingly participating in the GNU,s buy-off.

UNMIS AND EU: ALL MAY NOT BE WHAT IT SEEMS

¶14. (C) In separate conversations with UNMIS Political Affairs Officer Judith Goetz and the EU Special Representative for Sudan Pekka Haavisto, both expressed their concerns to Poloff about the Eastern Front,s capacity in negotiations and noted that the GNU seems to be calling the shots with the full cooperation of the GSE. Both speculated whether the GSE,s position, initially seen as being pro-Eastern Front, has in fact shifted given the recent normalization of relations between the GSE and Sudan. Both feel that the GNU is exploiting weaknesses in the Eastern Front and offering proposals that reinforce the tribal divide within the Eastern Front.

COMMENT

¶15. (C) If obtaining a GNU/EF signed agreement is the sole benchmark for success, then the negotiations by all accounts are proceeding admirably well. However, despite the upbeat assessments of the GSE and many in the diplomatic community, the negotiations do not seem to be moving in favor of Eastern interests. While initially post was hopeful that the Eastern Front would maintain a strong negotiating position, the Eastern Front team is showing cracks as talks continue and individual members appear to be ready to accept side offers from the GNU. The GNU clearly will not consent in the negotiations to one state in the East and seems to have correctly assessed that they eventually will be offered a compromise proposal. Few in the community seem to recognize, or are willing to admit to, the splits occurring within the Eastern Front negotiating group. These splits promise to present even greater challenges to the Eastern Front after the negotiations conclude and implementation begins. End Comment.
MCINTYRE